

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY  
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

LOUISVILLE GAS AND ELECTRIC	)	
COMPANY FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH	)	CASE NO. 9607
CURB BOX ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	)	

SHOW CAUSE ORDER

On February 12, 1986, after a fire had broken out at the Hilltop Tavern located at 8012 Bardstown Road, Louisville, Kentucky, an employee of Louisville Gas and Electric Company ("LG&E") was badly burned while shutting off the supply of gas to this location. Curb box valves are located away from buildings, to be used in emergency situations, in order to prevent such accidents. The curb box at this location was buried approximately 6" below the surface and not accessible. This violates Commission regulation 807 KAR 5:006, Section 23(4)(a)3. LG&E has been cited previously for the same violation. The report pertaining to this incident, attached as Appendix A, contains a background of our curb box accessibility history with LG&E.

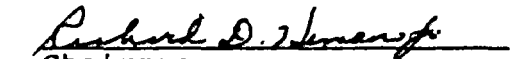
Due to the potentially dangerous situation of non-accessible curb boxes the Commission finds it necessary for LG&E to explain the reasons for not complying with these requirements, and what LG&E's intentions are to rectify this violation.


IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that LG&E shall appear before the Commission on Friday, July 11, 1986, at 9:00 A. M., Eastern Daylight Time, in Hearing Room No. 1 of the Commission's offices at

Frankfort, Kentucky, for the purpose of presenting evidence related to LG&E's curb box accessibility program and to show cause why the Commission should not penalize it for the stated violation.

Done at Frankfort, Kentucky, this 24th day of June, 1986.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

  
Chairman

  
Vice Chairman

  
Commissioner

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

R E P O R T

TO: Claude G. Rhorer, Jr., Director *CR*  
Division of Utility Engineering  
and Services

THRU: E. Scott Smith, Chief Engineer *ESS.*  
Larry L. Amburgey, Investigator Supervisor *LL*

FROM: Jeffrey M. Schroeder  
Utility Investigator

DATE: April 22, 1986

RE: Accident Investigation of Fire at Hilltop Tavern,  
Louisville, Kentucky

BRIEF

On February 12, 1986, we received notice from Louisville Gas and Electric Company (LG&E) of a fire and an injured employee. Details of this incident are found in the investigation of this Report. This investigation uncovered a previous and constant deficiency with LG&E.

BACKGROUND

During an investigation of a natural gas explosion incident of September 23, 1984, at 4864 Fegenbush Lane, Louisville, Kentucky, LG&E was unable to locate the cut-off valve in the curb box located near the main. At this time LG&E was cited under 807 KAR 5:006, Section 23(4)(a)3, of the PSC General Rules. This regulation requires the utility to annually inspect curb box locations for accessibility. Records indicate that the curb box at 4864 Fegenbush Lane was last checked for accessibility on August 4, 1982. This finding prompted correspondence between our staff and LG&E to correct this violation.

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LG&E instructs its meter readers to check for accessibility of curb boxes on an annual basis. However, it appears that LG&E meter readers do not spend time locating the curb boxes. If these curb boxes are not visible they are recorded as being non-accessible. At this time LG&E has not provided the manpower to locate these curb boxes that have been recorded as being non-accessible.

LG&E has begun a program to check these curb boxes for operability on a "catch up" schedule. Under PSC regulations, curb box valves must be inspected for operability on a ten year basis. However, the curb boxes that were recorded as non-accessible are not given priority.

LG&E has 6 one-man crews to check these curb box valves and are trying to get 6 additional employees. Even with 12 employees the company may have difficulty completing its inspection requirements.

LG&E was again cited for this deficiency on our 1985 Comprehensive Inspection.

#### INVESTIGATION

On February 12, 1986, the gas section received notice from LG&E of a fire and an injured LG&E employee at the Hilltop Tavern in Louisville, Kentucky. At the time of the call the situation

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sounded serious, so I was instructed by Investigator Supervisor Larry Amburgey to go to the site to further investigate this incident.

As I arrived, at 8012 Bardstown Road, another LG&E crew was on the job to test the lines and restore service to the tavern. Fred Lutz of LG&E, who investigates all incidents involving LG&E was at the site. Mr. Lutz explained the situation of the incident. I stayed at the site where a crew was trying to locate a curb box. These curb boxes should be accessible. The crew found the curb box 4 to 6 inches below the surface in front of the tavern. The LG&E employee might not have been burned if the curb box had been accessible.

The line was separated at the curb box and plugged for test purposes. The service line held at 80 psig. The house line was tested with a mercury gauge at 10 pounds. The pressure did not hold so the lines were plugged. LG&E will renew service after a plumber has repaired the house lines.

On February 13, 1986, I met with LG&E officials Bill Neblett, Dick Westerfield and Rich Eder. Mr. Westerfield explained the events that occurred the previous morning, as well as the events that led up to the incident on February 12, 1986.

An 8 inch main replacement in front of the tavern was completed on July 17, 1985. During the construction, water got into the lines and LG&E could not completely remove it. On

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December 4, 1985, LG&E received a complaint from the tavern that the line was frozen. LG&E thawed the line and installed a light to keep any moisture in the meter set from freezing. Again on December 15, 1985, the line froze. This time the bulb had burned out. LG&E thawed the line and installed another bulb. Then on February 12, 1986, once again the line froze, and once again the bulb had burned out. The LG&E crew found the orifice of the regulator was frozen. One crew member thawed the regulator with a propane torch. After the regulator had thawed he placed the torch about 3 or 4 feet away. He said the torch was off. The gas was turned on to purge the line of water and the gas ignited. The gas was cut off by LG&E and one employee was badly burned at this time. The fire department quickly extinguished the fire. Attachments show damages.

On April 7, 1986, I again met with Dick Westerfield, Bill Neblett and Rich Eder to review the curb box accessibility records for this site. Records indicate that district 5, which includes Hilltop Tavern, was inspected for accessibility on May 7, 1985. The curb box was not accessible and was not attempted to be made accessible. However, due to a company error the wrong code was keyed into the permanent records which showed stop box being operable instead of non-accessible.

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FINDINGS

LG&E has not complied with PSC regulation 807 KAR 5:006, Section 23(4)(a)3. The intent of this regulation is to annually inspect the curb boxes to insure accessibility. All curb boxes that are not accessible shall be made accessible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that LG&E be cited for failure to comply with the curb box accessibility requirements under 807 KAR 5:006, Section 23(4)(a)3. The Commission staff recommends that a show cause proceeding be initiated against the utility.

At the proceeding, LG&E should be ready to explain why it is out of compliance with the Commission's rules and regulations. The utility should also be ordered to show cause why the Commission should not penalize it for the stated violation.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jeffrey M. Schroeder*

Jeffrey M. Schroeder

JMS/lr

Louisville Gas & Electric  
Hilltop Tavern Incident

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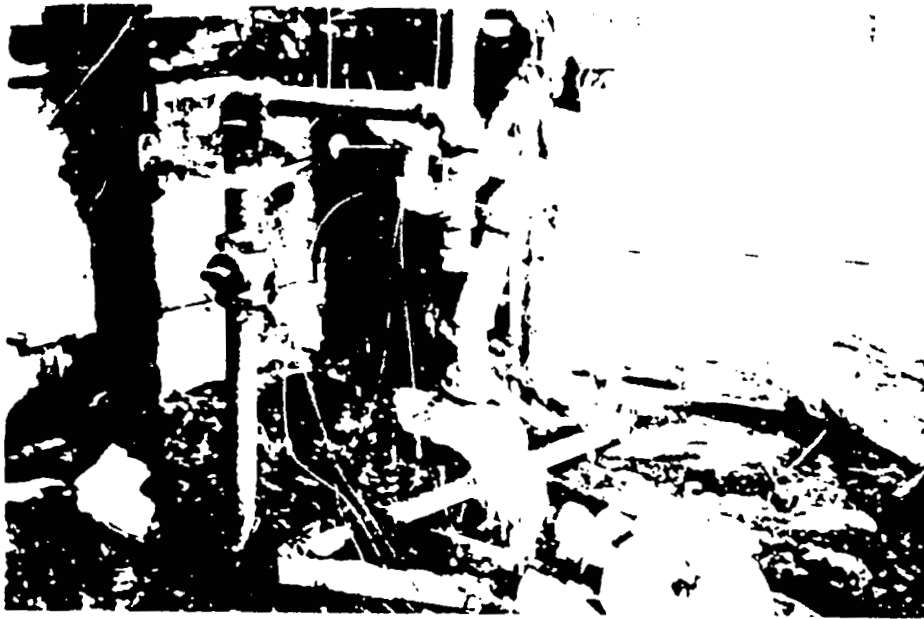
Two photographs show damage caused by fire





Louisville Gas & Electric  
Hilltop Tavern Incident

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Damaged meter set at Hilltop Tavern



April 22, 1986



Testing of customer service line

April 22, 1986



Hilltop Tavern curb box not accessible, 6" below surface



April 22, 1986



Curb box at Hilltop Tavern made accessible.

